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to show economic criticism (*The Rise of Silas Lapham* [1885] and *The Minister's Charge* [1886]), coincided exactly with the years of the formation of the American Federation of Labor. The period came to an end in the late nineties when, with the impulse for social criticism gone, Howells admitted that he "felt himself a very tiresome old story,"⁴⁴ but that he "must boil the pot somehow."⁴⁵ Nothing he wrote earlier or later has the importance of the group of novels within the period under the influence of Socialism. *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), for example, has not been superseded as "the best novel of New York."⁴⁶

JACOB WARREN GETZELS

MORE ON AMERICAN NEGRO SLAVE REVOLTS

Since the publication of the present writer's "American Negro Slave Revolts" (SCIENCE & SOCIETY, 1, no. 4) he has come across about thirty more plots and uprisings. It is therefore proper to revise the previous approximation of one hundred and thirty, and to declare that there were at least one hundred and sixty *reported*¹ American Negro slave conspiracies and revolts between 1663 and 1865.

Some of these new conspiracies have features worthy of particular notice. Thus it is clear that slaves of different states jointly planned an uprising in the Spring of 1810, and that they had considered the scheme for several months. In about March, 1810, two letters² were found on a road in Halifax county, North Carolina. One was from a slave in Greene county, Georgia, to another slave, Cornell Lucas, of Martin county, North Carolina; another, likewise from and to slaves, had been sent from Tennessee and was intended for Brunswick county, Virginia. The contents of both letters, even as to details, were similar, and one, that to Cornell Lucas, may be quoted in full:

Dear Sir—I received your letter to the fourteenth of June, 1809 with great freedom and joy to hear and understand what great proceedance you have made, and the resolu-

⁴⁴ *Life in Letters of W. D. Howells*, II, p. 104.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴⁶ Carl Van Doren, *The American Novel*, p. 139.

¹ Censorship was strong and this word "reported" is an important qualification. Thus Fanny Kemble (*Journal of a residence on a Georgia plantation in 1838-1839*, London, 1863, p. 300-01, 359) refers to a hushed-up slave conspiracy which she does not date. And a gentleman in South Carolina, reminiscing in 1888, refers to a reported plot in Abbeville, but gives no date. (J. B. O'Neill and J. A. Chapman, *Annals of Newberry*, Newberry, 1892, Part II, p. 501.)

² N. Y. *Evening Post*, April 30, 1810.

tion you have in proceeding on in business as we have undertook, and hope you will still continue in the same mind. We have spread the sense nearly over the continent in our part of the country, and have the day when we are to fall to work, and you must be sure not to fail on that day, and that is the 22d April, to begin about midnight, and do the work at home first, and then take the armes of them you slay first, and that will strengthen us more in armes—for freedom we want and will have, for we have served this cruel land long enuff, & be as secret convaing your nuse as possabel, and be sure to send it by some cearfull hand, and if it happens to be discovered, fail not in the day, for we are full abel to conquer by any means. Sir, I am your Captain James, living in the state of Jorgy, in Green county—so no more at present, but remaining your sincer friend and captain until death.

These letters were given to General T. Blount, a North Carolina congressman, and he, in turn, forwarded them to J. Milledge, Governor of Georgia. This probably explains the passage in the latter's message to the legislature referring³ to information he had received "from a source so respectable as to admit but little doubt of the existence of a plan of an insurrection being formed among our domesticks and particularly in Greene county." A resident of Augusta, Georgia, wrote⁴ to a friend in Salem, Massachusetts, on April 9, 1810, that

The letter from "Captain James" is but a small part of the evidence of the disposition of the Blacks in this part of the country. The most vigorous measures are taking to defeat their infernal designs. May God preserve us from the fate of St. Domingo. The papers here will, for obvious reasons, observe total silence on this business; and the mail near closing, I can say no more on the subject at present.

And, so far as Georgia is concerned, "no more on the subject at present" is known.

A letter of May 30, 1810, from no less an individual than Richard W. Byrd of Smithfield, Virginia, to Governor John Tyler affords evidence of repercussions in that state. He wrote,⁵ in part:

An insurrection of the blacks, on the Saturday night, preceding Whit-Sunday, is much feared. As to myself, I am not satisfied that their plans are perfectly matured; but that such a scheme has been in contemplation, is beyond all doubt. Our unremitted vigilance may probably frustrate their designs in this neighborhood—but unless similar exertions are *generally* used, the consequences may be extremely fatal. A report, that such an attempt would be made about Whit-Sunday, in North Carolina, has been very prevalent here for eight or ten days.

One "negro boy," after "receiving twenty lashes" stated "that the operations were to commence in Carolina . . . that they were to fight with clubs, spikes and axes, and, if necessary, they (the Carolina negroes) would immediately come on here to help the Virginia negroes." Mr. Byrd felt that the

³ R. B. Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, Chapel Hill, 1933, p. 274.

⁴ N. Y. *Evening Post*, April 30, 1810.

⁵ *Broadsides*: Virginia, May 30, 1810. Ac 5225, Mss. room, Library of Congress. Similar fears were expressed at this time in Norfolk—see *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, x, p. 83.

slave preachers used their religious meetings as veils for revolutionary schemes and referred particularly to a "General Peter" of Isle of Wight, who had been in communication with slaves of North Carolina.

In their letters the slaves referred to the planned revolt as an earthquake, and one Virginia slave had been heard to say "that there would be an earthquake here [as well as in North Carolina] on the same night, that he was entitled to his freedom, and he would be damned, if he did not have it in a fortnight." Mr. Byrd concluded by remarking that "We have taken up many of these fellows, and expect to go on in the same way. This course may possibly avert the dreadful calamity with which we are threatened," since he thought "it probable that we have broken the chain by which they were linked."

As a matter of fact there were reports of an actual slave outbreak with several casualties near Richmond in June, 1810, but these were later denied.⁶ Nothing concerning this, either of confirmation or refutation, is in the Richmond papers, and the truth about it is not clear. Certainly, at the end of November of this same year, "a dangerous conspiracy among the negroes was discovered" in Lexington, Kentucky, and a "great many" slaves were arrested, but their fate is unknown.⁷

A New Orleans plot of 1812 involved whites as well as slaves.⁸ It was discovered August 18. "The militia were ordered out which has completely frustrated their intentions. Some white men who were at their head are in prison; however a strong guard of the militia are still ordered out every night." One of these white men, Joseph Wood, was executed in New Orleans on September 13. "All the militia of the city were under arms—strong patrols were detailed for the night." It appears⁹ that another of the whites implicated was named Macarty, but what became of him, or the Negroes involved, is not known.

A secondary source¹⁰ refers to secret revolutionary organizations of

⁶ Philadelphia *General Advertiser*, July 2, 1810; Boston *Columbian Sentinel*, July 4, 1810.

⁷ Entry of December 1, 1810, in diary of William L. Brown, Mss. room, New York Public Library.

⁸ N. Y. *Evening Post*, September 21, October 20, 1812.

⁹ H. T. Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, Washington, 1932, III, p. 449.

¹⁰ B. J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* (New York, 1869), p. 690. Lossing states he is "indebted to an accomplished American scholar and professor in one of our colleges" for this material. A glance at the table in this communication and that in the writer's previous article will show that the years of the War of 1812 were marked by considerable concerted slave rebelliousness. A letter detailing extreme fears of slaves in South Carolina in 1812 will be found in the New York *Evening Post*, August 4, 1812.

slaves in South Carolina in 1813. And this is of particular interest for it publishes a song, written by a slave, and said to have been sung at the meetings of these groups. It parodied "Hail, Columbia," and was as follows:

Hail! all hail! ye Afric clan!
 Hail! ye oppressed, ye Afric band
 Who toil and sweat in slavery bound,
 And when your health and strength are gone,
 Are left to hunger and to mourn.
 Let *independence* be your aim,
 Ever mindful what 'tis worth,
 Pledge your bodies for the prize,
 Pile them even to the skies!

CHORUS:

Firm, united let us be,
 Resolved on death or liberty!
 As a band of patriots joined,
 Peace and plenty we shall find.

Look to heaven with manly trust,
 And swear by Him that's always just
 That no white foe, with impious hand
 Shall slave your wives and daughters more,
 Or rob them of their virtue dear!
 Be armed with valor firm and true,
 Their hopes are fixed on Heaven and you,
 That Truth and Justice will prevail.

CHORUS:

Firm, united, etc.

Arise! arise! shake off your chains!
 Your cause is just, so Heaven ordains;
 To you shall freedom be proclaimed!
 Raise your arms and bare your breasts,
 Almighty God will do the rest.
 Blow the clarion's warlike blast;
 Call every negro from his task;
 Wrest the scourge from Buckra's hand,
 And drive each tyrant from the land!

CHORUS:

Firm, united, etc.

A good deal has been written about the Maroons, or outlying pugnacious fugitive slaves, of the West Indies and Central and South America,

but the existence of such groups in the United States is rarely mentioned. They did, however, exist, and while the material on them is highly dispersed, it is very impressive.

One interesting camp of slaves caused alarm in Alabama in 1827. This runaway camp, situated in the fork of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers, was attacked¹¹ in June by a body of armed slaveholders. In the engagement one white was wounded, three slaves killed, several wounded and captured, while some escaped. The slaves, men and women, had lived for years in cabins they had erected and carried on marauding expeditions against nearby plantations. They were, before the attack, about to build a fort, after which “ . . . a great number of negroes in the secret were to join them, and it is thought that in that event they could not be taken without bringing cannon to bear upon them.” One of the whites in the attack declared:

This much I can say that old Hal [a leader of the slaves] and his men fought like Spartans, not one gave an inch of ground, but stood, was shot dead or wounded and fell on the spot. The negro man Pompey, who is now living, tried to get his gun fresh primed after he was shot through the thigh.

Other recently discovered slave plots and revolts are:

1721 S. C.	} ¹²	1795 La., N. C.	} ¹⁴
1747 N. Y.		1796 N. C., S. C., Ga.	
1791 La.	} ¹³	1802 Va.	} ¹⁵
1792 La., N. C.		1803 N. C.	
1793 S. C.			

¹¹ *Mobile Register*, June 20, 21, 1827, quoted in *N. Y. Evening Post*, July 11, 12, 1827. Louisiana was troubled by two runaway camps the same year (see *N. Y. Evening Post*, December 4, 1827).

¹² C. Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, America and West Indies*, March, 1720, to December, 1721, p. 425; *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, New York, 1937, VIII, p. 345.

¹³ R. R. Hill, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Documents Relating to the History of the United States . . . deposited in the Archivo General de Indias at Seville*, Washington, 1916, p. 402, 100; *The Boston Gazette*, September 3, 1792; M. Treudley in *Journal of Race Development*, VII, p. 124.

¹⁴ R. R. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 16; *Charleston City Gazette*, July 18, 23, 1795; R. H. Taylor in *North Carolina Hist. Rev.*, v, p. 23-24; *N. Y. Minerva*, June 11, July 16, August 4, 12, 26, November 21, and for December, 1796; W. Priest, *Travels in the United States*, London, 1802, VIII, p. 171.

¹⁵ C. W. Janson, *The Stranger in America*, London, 1807, p. 395-98; *N. Y. Evening Post*, June 2, 1803.

1805 Md., Ga., La. }	1825 N. C. }
1811 Va., La. } ¹⁶	1829 Ga. } ¹⁹
1812 Va., Ky. }	1830 La. }
1813 D. C. } ¹⁷	1840 Ala. } ²⁰
1814 Md., Va. }	
1818 N. C. } ¹⁸	

The conventional attitude on the behavior of the American Negro as a slave may be illustrated by excerpts from a few very recent works: Maury Maverick²¹—"Slaves, counted by the millions, were quite complacent"; Professor J. D. Hicks²²—"Attempts at insurrection were extremely rare"; Professor J. G. Randall²³—"Surprisingly few instances of slave insurrections"; the late Professor U. B. Phillips²⁴—"Slave revolts and plots were very seldom in the United States." A minimum of one hundred and sixty reported cases of plots or revolts certainly does not indicate complacency, nor that organized efforts for freedom were a rarity. It does demonstrate a consistent, courageous, and, ultimately, decisive struggle²⁵ against enslavement on the part of the American Negro people.

HERBERT APTHEKER

¹⁶ N. Y. *Evening Post*, August 12, September 3, November 2, 1805; D. Rowland, *Official Letter Books of W. C. C. Claiborne*, Jackson, 1917, vi, p. 20; *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, x, p. 97-98; E. G. Swem, *A Bibliography of Virginia*, II, Richmond, 1917, p. 124.

¹⁷ N. Y. *Evening Post*, February 11, June 12, 1812; C. G. Bowers, ed., *The Diary of E. Gerry, Jr.*, N. Y., 1927, p. 198-99; John Graham to James Monroe, Washington, July 19, 1813; *Monroe Correspondence*, Library of Congress.

¹⁸ *Richmond Enquirer*, August 27, 1814; *Norfolk Herald*, March 29, April 8, 1814; see also letter from Philip Stuart to James Madison, July 29, 1814, in *Madison Papers*; and John Smith to Edward Tiffin, August 28, 1814; Walter Jones to James Monroe, December 10, 1814, in *Monroe Papers*, Library of Congress; *North Carolina Hist. Rev.*, v, p. 24.

¹⁹ G. G. Johnson, *Ante-bellum North Carolina*, Chapel Hill, 1937, p. 515; *Southern Advocate* (Huntsville, Ala.), April 24, May 8, 1829; James Stuart, *Three Years in North America*, Edinburgh, 1833, p. 123; *Journal of Southern History*, II, p. 325-26.

²⁰ *Southern Advocate*, January 29, 1830; *Richmond Enquirer*, February 6, 1830; S. A. Ferrall, *A Ramble of Six Thousand Miles . . .*, London, 1832, p. 196; K. E. R. Pickard, *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed*, N. Y., 1856, p. 159-61.

²¹ *A Maverick American* (New York, 1937), p. 315.

²² *The Federal Union* (Boston, 1937), p. 496.

²³ *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1937), p. 53.

²⁴ *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (December, 1937), xxi, p. 311.

²⁵ Appreciation of this fact is given in Harvey Wish, *Journal of Negro History* (July, 1937), xxii, p. 320.

NOTE—In some cases similar dates and places are here listed as in the table in SCIENCE & SOCIETY, I, no. 4, 536-38. But the plots are distinct.